

Institutional Policies and Individual Incentives Affecting TEFL Faculty Members' Research Involvement

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Abstract

Faculty members are important stakeholders for any higher education institution, as they play a vital role in advancing both theoretical and practical knowledge while training specialized professionals. Research skills among faculty members are essential for sustaining and developing higher education. To enhance these skills, assessing their attitudes and educational needs in research is critical. To this end, this qualitative research was conducted by ten teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) faculty members of Teacher Education universities of Iran. The goal was to identify obstacles that hinder faculty members from doing research and facilitators that motivate them to do it to improve their research productivity and cultivate a research-focused culture. Using face-to-face and indirect semi-structured interviews, faculty members' ideas were gathered, transcribed, coded, and analyzed thoroughly with a thematic approach. Identified themes were categorized into two broad categories: personal and social factors. Personal factors comprised participants' attitudes towards understanding research methodology and data analysis techniques, and other issues like motivation and lack of time due to their heavy workload. Social factors consisted of journals' policy, financial resources, promotion and tenure, and access to newly-published materials. The findings highlight the need for focused professional development programs to enhance teacher educators' research abilities and provide required facilities, which will ultimately improve both their teaching/researching practices and teacher education programs.

Keywords

Attitudes,
Conducting Research,
Faculty Members,
Teacher Education
Universities.

1. INTRODUCTION

Faculty members are the most important resource in any university, and their personal and professional development is the foundation of quality enhancement in the teacher education field (Cocal et al., 2017; Farrell et al., 2021). To meet faculty members' individual and career goals as teachers, scholars, and researchers, they must be proficient, creative, and productive instructors, successful researchers, and effective academicians (Abrugena et al., 2020; Kamel, 2016). Nevertheless, many university professors are incapable of publishing scientific papers (Khatibi, 2024). Moreover, every university has its own mission, objectives, vision, perspective, and values,

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and tries to adhere to its articulated policies. Students who graduate from universities must also be professional, competent, and responsible to the educational and scholarly needs of their society (Darawad et al., 2018). These facts necessitate probing university professors' perceptions and beliefs about their strong points, weaknesses, and deficiencies.

Conducting scientific research has become one of the priorities of every higher education institution (Gamoran, 2023; Iqbal et al., 2018). Universities value faculty members who participate in research projects to meet the growing need for scholarly works and knowledge development. Nevertheless, most faculty members at universities in Iran lack formal training in areas essential to improving their academic performance. These pressures have evolved from the competition between different educational institutions, contemporary curriculum development, and shortcomings in research, teaching, and production (Ghorrooneh, 2020; Hegde, 2013). Research shows that this need may be met by developing faculty members' skills and knowledge in areas considered essential to their performance as a teacher, researcher, or administrator (Compton, 2022; Condon et al., 2016). Faculty's professional development can also set the ground for quality improvement in teacher education. As such, faculty members should be assisted in dealing with fast changes in higher education progress, and their attitudes should be assessed thoroughly and continually to know about their needs and meet their goal (Farzi et al., 2021; Leslie et al., 2013; Schmid et al., 2021; Swennen et al., 2010).

Noticing what was mentioned above, this study was done at some of the Teacher Education University branches in Iran to describe the status of its faculty members regarding their attitudes towards doing research, potential obstacles, and to find new solutions for their problems and improve their research skills. The results of identifying and analyzing the faculty members' attitudes, beliefs, and opinions in the realm of research can be used in planning in-service training courses, improving research skills, and enhancing research development at the universities. Professors equipped with strong knowledge of doing research are better mentors and supervisors for their students to work on their theses, dissertations, and course papers. Furthermore, students can enjoy a prolific pedagogical and educational atmosphere due to their professors' expertise and efficiency in doing research. The students also have the opportunity to collaborate and take part in research projects. Therefore, the main purpose of this endeavor was to assess the faculty's attitudes in this area in order to reach a practical and useful guideline that would encourage them to develop their research skills, boost research culture, and promote research productivity in the universities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Tseng (2022), research can play a vital role in pointing policymakers, civil society, and communities towards a stronger, more sustainable, and just world. However, getting there means building on what we know about what it takes for research to be useful, used, and impactful. University faculty members currently encounter expanding demands to be productive clinicians, creative and effective instructors, and successful inquirers. In their study, Sorcinelli et al. (2006) emphasized that such demands necessitate faculty members acquiring new knowledge, various skills, and abilities in many aspects, including employing technology for doing research, new teaching methods, learning strategies, and mastering new computer-based educational programs. One vision for the profession of faculty development in the research domain focuses on three key themes (Austin & Sorcinelli, 2013; Sorcinelli et al., 2006). First, a call for more emphasis in the field of organizational development to build up leadership abilities in the faculty, and to work with academic leaders, especially chairs and deans, to create supporting environments for good teaching and scholarship. Enhancing skills and aptitudes for organizational development has increasingly become important for the instruction profession. There seems to be a widely held

assumption that the long-term effects of most faculty development activities will bring in some degree of organizational development (Hershock et al., 2023).

Second, Faculty development will be linked to the capacity of the field to engage in more research about best practices that enhance student learning, and to work systematically on a research-based approach in learning and teaching. Finally, enhancing the future of the profession will require new thinking about ideal structures for faculty development and less centralized ways of operating organizationally (Austin & Sorcinelli, 2013).

To evaluate the positive effects of examining teachers' attitudes, Kirkpatrick (1959) evaluation guideline has been widely used in research and practice across disciplines (Aluko, 2014). Kirkpatrick's guideline incorporates four stages: reaction, learning, behavior, and results.

- Stage 1: Reaction refers to participants' satisfaction and their motivation to take further action based on what they learned.
- Stage 2: Learning measures change in participants' knowledge, skills, and attitudes.
- Stage 3: Behavior assesses the ability of participants to apply what they learned.
- Finally, stage 4, results, evaluates changes for other stakeholders, such as students, because of faculty's participation.

Empirical Studies

Regarding more recent empirical studies published in the field, Algahtani et al. (2020) assessed and identified faculty needs and important skills. This study, provided information addressing the needs of, or gaps between, current and desired conditions in medical education in Saudi Arabia. The study also identified the most important elements (i.e., personal improvement) of faculty-perceived effectiveness for success in educational research. The last part of the study followed the same purpose which identified the most important components of research-based skills and abilities. According to the results, authors declared that in their study, critical thinking was not mentioned by participants. Critical thinking that is learning to think independently and to develop one's own opinions supported by existing evidence is one of the basic elements among the teachers. On the other hand, in Algahtani et al.'s (2020) study, knowledge of education, a discipline that is concerned with methods of teaching and learning in schools or school-like environments, was mentioned. Also, ethical considerations were not considered to be important. It is noticeable that in their research, ethical considerations were defined as a set of principles that guide the research designs and practices and strictly control all actions and decisions. These principles include voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, potential for harm, and results communication. They stated that all these factors were noticeable in the process of legal and sound research.

Regarding categorizing faculty members' academic needs, Hosseinzadeh et al. (2020) showed that the educational needs of the faculty members in research can be classified into some topics. Moreover, from a gender difference perspective, women reported higher education needs compared to men. In line with this line of research, focusing on the educational needs assessment of faculty members, Shafaei-Khanghah et al. (2017) found that, based on the prioritization of the needs within the clinical and basic academic members, the greatest need was related to writing scientific texts in English. In addition, the lowest priorities among the clinical and social science faculty members who participated in the study were familiarity with English journals (26.8%) and the use of electronic resources (27.7%). The most important needs perceived by teacher educators in their study were "ability to understand research methodology" and "data analysis skills". Two main themes, "knowledge of the education system" and "knowledge of ethical considerations," were perceived as the least significant competencies to develop research-based abilities. Their finding also showed that a comprehensive research empowerment framework for teacher educators

would involve several key considerations. These would include the goals of the program, the specific components of the program, the potential challenges, barriers to implementing the program, and strategies for overcoming these challenges.

The effects of joint efforts and common projects were examined by [MacPhail et al. \(2018\)](#), who claimed that university professors need to heighten the level of collaboration and cooperation with their colleagues in other institutes. Its benefits are twofold. They can share resources, knowledge, and skills with other researchers, and they can join a common project and contribute to a joint effort to share responsibilities and speed up the process of conducting the research, writing, and editing the final report. Moreover, [Jafari et al. \(2020\)](#) and [Guraya and Chen \(2019\)](#) highlighted the importance of developing the personal and professional development of faculty members. They believed that reinforcing the abilities and skills of professors equals more productivity and prolific universities that, in turn, lead to training more potent and confident students.

In another relevant study, [Compton \(2022\)](#) examined the attitudes of faculty members who spent their early, mid, and late career years and were charged with educating both graduate and undergraduate students involved in a research enterprise. His study investigated the factors influencing university professors to give opportunities to their students to join research projects. He also addressed the faculty's approach to managing their time and resources to organize their scholarly and professional lives for collaborating research projects and dealing with relevant issues such as heavy teaching loads. Finally, he studied financial and institutional factors hampering or facilitating faculty. The findings showed that first, the faculty of health science was more willing to do research than the humanities science faculty. The most important individual factors were their gender and disciplines. Also, there was a close relationship between funding success and their performance; Finally, a hierarchical regression model accounted for 62.3% of the variance in the faculty research motivation measure.

In a recently-published study, [Vigh \(2024\)](#), through action research, examined the development of research skills through research-focused microteaching lessons among pre-service teacher educators. Participants were 45 pre-service teacher students whose research skills, research reports, experiences, and individual differences were examined using statistical and content analysis. The findings showed that participants performed much better at analyzing lessons than identifying research purposes, formulating research questions, or even reviewing the literature.

Similarly, [Gamoran \(2023\)](#) studied the factors affecting research project participation in universities and found that a barrier to the flourishing of research-practice partnerships in education is institutional challenges of the university faculty because most universities are not structured to encourage and promote partnership-oriented research. He believed that these challenges decrease the interests of faculty committed to partnerships with university norms and structures and can discourage participation. Simultaneously, universities often encounter external pressures to encourage more engagement with their communities; on the other hand, many faculty members consider such engagement inconsistent with their predefined roles as teachers, not researchers.

In a qualitative case study, [Risan \(2025\)](#) examined three teacher educators' attitudes towards conducting research. The data was collected by interviewing these educators and observing their campus-based activities. The findings showed that the three educators considered research as a self-evident expectation associated with higher education. They also explain that these expectations are vague and implicit; thus, they have not been provided with instructions on how to get involved in academic research activities. The findings also demonstrated how expectations of being research-based faculty challenged and enabled these educators' sense of authority in

higher education. For them, trying to be research-based faculty provided them with the authority that they needed to legitimate their work as an educator.

Noticing what was told above, to the best of our knowledge, no existing study has specifically examined the attitudes of TEFL faculty members and their outcomes within Teacher Education Universities in Iran. While there is a wealth of well-researched studies in other disciplines, the objectives for teacher education faculty, who are already specialists in their field, should be more clearly defined and tailored to their needs. Therefore, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the personal factors in TEFL faculty members' attitudes towards conducting research at Teacher Education Universities of Iran?
2. What are the social factors in TEFL faculty members' attitudes towards conducting research at Teacher Education Universities of Iran?

3. METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

Participants

Given the exploratory nature of the study, a qualitative approach was adopted to delve deeply into the participants' beliefs and attitudes towards the issue (Ary et al., 2019). The study population consisted of all TEFL faculty members of Teacher Education Universities in Iran. The samples, which were purposefully selected, consisted of ten University faculty members who were aged from 31 to 48 years ($M=39.5$). Their degree was Ph.D. in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), and they were tenured professors in teacher education universities in Iran. Among them, five were males and five were females. All of them had experience in publishing scientific papers in top-tier journals. Their teaching experience ranged from five to 23 years. They were born and raised in Iran, where they lived most of their life. In their self-evaluation reports, all indicated near-native English proficiency in all four skills: writing, reading, listening, and speaking. The purpose of the study was distinctly explained to participants, and they consented to participate in this study.

Instrument

Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to learn about participants' attitudes and perceptions towards the investigated issue and portray their thoughts and mindsets deeply and elaborately (Ary et al., 2019). To do this, they were asked six open-ended questions, and the interviews were in their L1 (Persian), which were later translated into English. Questions were selected, noticing previous literature, and attempts were made to cover all aspects of the issue (see Appendix).

Procedure

Faculty members from five main colleges were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews, conducted either face-to-face or via telephone. Telephone interviews were included to accommodate geographic diversity and potential accessibility limitations for some participants. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and was recorded, transcribed, labeled, and stored on the second researcher's computer. The interview questions were pilot tested with a scientist experienced in qualitative methods, as well as with a teacher educator. Probes and follow-up questions were employed during the interviews to explore issues in greater depth and to ensure the interviewer's understanding of the gathered information (Ary et al., 2019). Examples of the open-ended questions from the interview guide can be found in Appendix.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) was inductively employed to identify the key themes in the data. The researchers read and re-read the transcriptions to thoroughly understand the underlying concepts. During this process, initial codes were assigned to the data, which were subsequently classified into categories. These categories ultimately formed the final themes used to compose the results section. Besides, selected quotes were included to provide additional evidence. To assess the credibility of the data analysis, member checking was performed; a draft of the written report was shared with the participants for their approval (Creswell & Clark, 2017). All participants confirmed the content and granted permission to use their quotes anonymously. A few also provided additional explanations and details. Furthermore, an experienced qualitative researcher independently coded the data. An inter-rater reliability score of 0.85 was achieved, which is considered acceptable (Cohen et al., 2018). Finally, the completed report was sent to a colleague, who was asked to review it and provide comments to improve its quality. Comments were addressed to the report, and the final report was edited and proofread.

4. RESULTS

Based on the data gathered and after analyzing it, factors that affect faculty members towards conducting research were divided into two broad themes: personal and social factors. Social factors, in turn, were divided into two subthemes: journal policies and institutional support.

Personal Factors

Based on the results obtained, the most significant personal factor influencing academic performance is general language proficiency. This includes skills in academic writing, which are essential for composing final research reports, as well as proficiency in writing scholarly papers, including designing, structuring, grammar rules, punctuation, and adherence to APA guidelines. Most participants highlighted these aspects as key factors in the first steps of doing research. Additionally, some others stated that they faced challenges in finding and selecting appropriate journals that align with the specific aims and scope of their disciplines. Moreover, they expressed that the process of submitting papers and corresponding with editors and reviewers requires specific knowledge and skills that some faculty members did not possess. As a participant mentioned:

I think that mastery of the English language helps a lot. Scientific mastery in our research field and awareness of theories and practice are essential. Since we are interested in finding the relationships between teaching and learning constructs, defining and measuring variables, posing correct research questions, and [formulating] hypotheses make it easy to write a scientific paper (Excerpt 3, Participant No. 5).

As the second personal factor, inconsistency between faculty members' disciplines and their students and institutional needs is noteworthy based on the frequency of happening. Some of the participants declared that their research domain is not consistent with their institution's research policy or their students' educational needs. In addition, inquiries need adequate computer science knowledge for searching databases, knowing about impact factors and other metrics of journals, formatting manuscripts according to journals' guidelines, and so on.

The third personal factor was extrinsic motivation for getting a job promotion and professional academic reputation. Faculty members' privilege usually depends on their teaching and research quality. Many universities set the criteria for job promotion on a scoring system based on the number and quality of published works by their faculty members. As an interviewee said:

The problem here is that there is no support for the real researcher. The research that has been carried out so far has not solved any problems of Teacher Education University itself. The research was carried out only for the sake of research and its privileges, such as getting promotion or tenure, not for solving the current problems of the university. The first point is solving the problems of the university itself and by the researchers in the field (Excerpt 3, Participant No. 8).

Another participant stated that:

As a researcher, I think I must first completely know my students' needs and the university where I work; I should know about the students' problems and have the mindset that I can do research work to solve the problems of my own students and then all the students in the country and even in the world (Excerpt 5, Participant No. 2).

Regarding personal knowledge, one of the interviewees stated:

Maybe half of my colleagues do not know what writing an article is like and how to communicate its results. They do not know about different journals and their requirements. We always tell our students that they should be lifelong learners. There is nothing wrong with learning. There are a lot of famous professors who always attend in-service training courses. However, the level of these classes should be appropriate to the academic level of the faculty members. Not too basic and not too advanced (Excerpt 2, Participant No. 6).

Social Factors

Journal Policies

Some of the social factors go back to the policies of journals. For example, subjective peer reviewing without any clear criteria, unfair rejections due to hiring incompetent and irrelevant referees by journals are some factors that participants categorized as social factors. In addition, some relationships, patronage, favoritism, lobbying, pulling strings, ghost and honorary authors may affect the fairness of the process of accepting and publishing papers. Furthermore, among the factors that are effective in facilitating the research process are the cooperation and assistance among university officials, the journal, and the author. Some of the participants declared that the refereeing process is too long in many journals, and it is disappointing for them to wait for more than one year to get published. Indeed, when their articles get published, much of the data and findings are outdated, expired, and practically useless. Some other participants mentioned a lack of a specified journal as a venue to publish their scholarly works. For example, a participant mentioned that:

The long time it takes for an article to be reviewed is disappointing. Sometimes, it takes a year or two, and then it is rejected with a single sentence that "your article is not compatible with this journal in terms of content." This is actually due to the shortage of journals in specialized fields; sometimes in the field of education we cannot find a suitable journal to publish our works (Excerpt 1, Participant No. 1).

Participants also believed that the use of inefficient and inexperienced referees unfamiliar with the field can hinder the research process. Additionally, they thought that a lack of awareness about journals' policies and processes may be problematic. As one of them mentioned:

My colleagues mainly believe that our responsibility at Teacher Education Universities is not researching at all, that is, they merely do educational job and do not know many of the basic points of research and they are not willing to learn it. Research, like anything else, requires knowledge and ability, and it cannot be done haphazardly. It requires a close association with different domestic and international journals, dealing with different editors and reviewers, and being patient and diligent (Excerpt 10, Participant No. 1).

Institutional Support

Some participants believed that there were challenges in research practice because universities cannot encourage and inspire their researchers sufficiently. Although most of them felt pressure from their universities for more contributions in publishing scholarly works, there were no rewards or any financial encouragement to motivate them. They asserted that universities should change their policies and provide more support for their faculty members because it could be a strong external incentive for doing institutional research. Furthermore, doing research itself includes a high cost that should be covered by universities. Additionally, some of the interviewees were reluctant to participate in the research activity due to their heavy teaching workload and extra responsibilities other than teaching and researching that universities place on them. Lack of access to advanced computers, equipment, high-speed internet, lack of access to newly-published papers and those that are published in subscription-based journals, and finally, lack of institutional technical support that is provided in research centers in universities are among the obstacles that participants referred to as institutional factors. A participant mentioned an important point in this way:

I think my university can invite expert researchers from other universities to help us work jointly on research projects. We need faster computers and unlimited access to databases and research resources. Sometimes, it takes me 15 minutes to search for a topic and download a paper (Excerpt 4, Participant No. 10).

Another participant pointed to taking extra courses provided by universities and put it in this way:

In some cases, a research area that is specific to our country's educational problems is not researched adequately, and all of us need to know about our students' needs, background, and problems to adhere to the relevant research areas. Considering the current specialization of the faculty members, for example, it should be mandatory for them to participate in conferences, seminars, and workshops held in their own fields of expertise to get more knowledge about their Iranian learners' problems (Excerpt 6, Participant No. 4).

Concerning the heavy workload and financial problems, an interviewee said:

A flagging economy forces most of us to have a side job that prevents us from taking the time to conduct research. Many university lecturers accept official

responsibilities that are not related to their expertise. I think this is one of the main problems that prevents professors from personal and professional development. Of course, some professors are interested in taking multiple positions other than their expertise because the financial support that they receive for articles is not sufficient to encourage them to do more research work. These obstacles must be removed so that a professor can really do what he or she wants to do, both in teaching and in research areas (Excerpt 2, Participant No. 7).

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study aimed at identifying and investigating faculty members' attitudes towards conducting research at Teacher Education Universities of Iran so that academic needs and priorities can be detected and utilized to improve research skills of faculty members and enhance research development at the University. The following research questions were addressed in this study: "What are individual factors in TEFL faculty members' attitudes towards conducting research at Teacher Education Universities of Iran?" "What are social factors in TEFL faculty members' attitudes towards conducting research at Teacher Education Universities of Iran?"

Noticing the obtained data and findings of the study, it can be claimed that faculty members' attitude towards conducting research was relatively positive, and they were mostly willing to participate in such activities; however, they mentioned many barriers in this realm that impede their progress. Some hindrances were due to their own language proficiency and professional abilities and skills, and others were associated with social factors and journals' policies, along with institutional support. Most professors defined training needs as the gap between the desired and the current situation in the research field and other job requirements as a university teacher. Providing facilities for doing scientific research and removing impediments were mentioned to be one of the responsibilities of all universities that believe in the value of skillful human resources.

Despite the fact that many university professors take several courses on "research design, methodology, and academic writing" in their master's and doctoral programs, their abilities and skills remain untapped and inactive since they usually do not activate them through actual practice of writing scholarly reports and submitting them to journals. One potential challenge in doing research for teacher educators is resistance or a lack of interest among faculty members. To overcome this challenge, it may be necessary to develop a compelling case for the benefits of engaging in research and scholarship, such as increased job satisfaction, professional recognition, and improved teaching effectiveness. Another potential challenge is the unavailability of resources, such as funding, time, and support from the institutions' leadership. Strategies for addressing these challenges could include seeking external funding sources, creating time-release policies for faculty members to engage in research and scholarship, and building partnerships with other institutions or organizations to share resources and expertise.

In terms of institutional support for faculty members, a range of activities, such as workshops, seminars, and webinars, can be held. These could cover topics such as research design, data collection and analysis, academic writing, and publication strategies. These extra programs can also include opportunities for teacher educators to participate in real research projects, either individually or in collaboration with their colleagues. As a result, a culture of research and scholarship will be promoted among the faculty members that motivates them to view research as an integral part of their professional development and teaching practice. Collaborating with other professors in other universities can involve creating opportunities for them to share the new findings with colleagues and present them at conferences, and publishing them in reputable journals. This, in turn, can lead to improved teaching effectiveness, as teacher educators will be better able to identify and address the needs of their students.

Additionally, results showed that engaging in research and scholarship can contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field of education, leading to new insights and innovations in teaching and learning. By promoting research as an integral part of professional development and teaching practice, teacher educators are encouraged to view research as a valuable and meaningful activity. This can lead to increased collaboration and sharing of knowledge among faculty members, as well as increased recognition and visibility for the institution as a whole. All in all, conducting research by the faculty members may enhance the quality of teaching and learning, promote a culture of research and scholarship, and contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field of education. By providing university professors with the tools and skills they need to engage in research, universities may make ensure that they are better prepared to meet the needs of their students and contribute to the ongoing development of the field of education.

The finding also demonstrated that to have successful teachers/researchers, with a strong emphasis on hands-on training and practical application, they should be provided with opportunities to engage in scholarly activities and research projects. Moreover, opportunities for mentorship and collaboration with other faculty members should be prepared for them. Providing resources and support to help faculty members overcome the challenges and barriers to engaging in research, such as a lack of fast computers, technological equipment, and financial support, are considered essential duties for universities.

Our results were congruent with [Risan \(2025\)](#), who reported positive attitudes of participants and a favorable atmosphere of the university's context in supporting scholastic activities. The obtained results of this inquiry are also consistent with [Shafaei-Khanghah et al. \(2017\)](#) and [Vigh \(2024\)](#) in which the most important inhibiting factors of faculty participation in research project were claimed to be personal issues such as English writing skills, lack of knowledge about various methods and data analysis techniques, and lack of familiarity with suitable journals. The results also confirm those obtained by [MacPhail et al. \(2018\)](#) who accentuated the role of collaboration and cooperation in conducting academic research.

On the other hand, [Algahtani et al. \(2020\)](#), [Hosseinzadeh et al. \(2020\)](#), and [Compton \(2022\)](#), among other factors, examined the effects of gender and discipline on the faculty members' attitudes towards conducting research. These factors were not taken into account in the present study. Moreover, [Algahtani et al. \(2020\)](#) emphasized the role of ethical considerations in conducting research and collecting data and reported that the majority of researchers are not aware of the importance of these considerations. In his opinion, this factor should gain more attention and specific instruction should be provided to raise awareness of faculty members in this realm.

Conclusive Implications and Suggestions for Further Studies

Investigating and assessing faculty members' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions towards different educational and professional issues is indispensable for the development of higher education and sustainable development. Human resources' attitudes towards their potential weaknesses and strengths in their organizations pave the way for individual and common growth and development of talents and capabilities of employees, and lead to qualitative and quantitative performance improvement. Therefore, human resources at any level of the organization's categories, whether simple or high-level complex jobs, require assessment to help them develop their qualities by training, learning, and acquiring new knowledge and skills.

With a qualitative approach and interviewing ten faculty members of Teacher Education Universities of Iran, this study attempted to dig into its participants' thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and opinions towards conducting research in the context of Iran's universities. Qualitative data were gathered and analyzed thematically and findings emphatically confirmed the effectiveness and positive impact of probing and investigating faculty members' postures and perspectives

regarding one of their serious challenges in their career in higher education. Findings show that there is no unified and standard framework for faculty members' efforts on their scholastic activities and their participation in research, and it is often accomplished voluntarily by their own choice. On the other hand, although such activities need adequate budget, resources, administrative efforts, enthusiastic support, commitment, contribution, time, and space, most of the researchers rarely receive sufficient assistance from their university's research centers. Additionally, some researchers have difficulties with finding suitable journals, dealing with their requirements, paying publishing fees, and so forth.

In the present study, our study population was directly or indirectly involved in research activities and had the experience of publishing journal articles. Changes in some institutional policies and providing more financial resources, opportunities for collaboration, and guiding and directing unsystematic efforts by professionals and experts can increase the potential of publishing scholastic works. Policymakers and responsible managers can adopt particular research initiatives to remove the obstacles and increase the active engagement of their academic personnel. The results of this study could be the basis for similar attempts in future comparative studies and policy formulations that may promote institutions' research instruction to achieve their organizational objectives to meet national and international needs for academic development and knowledge dissemination.

Implications of the Study

After analyzing the data qualitatively, the researcher ended up with two main themes. The central theme of personal factors included concepts such as understanding research design and methodology, applying research findings to practice, data collection and analysis skills, communicating the findings with other colleagues, collaboration, and time management skills. According to what the interviewees said, there were also social factors such as supportive institutional culture, access to financial support, and professional development opportunities. Moreover, heavy workload, limited funding, lack of collaborative research opportunities, and lack of professional development opportunities were among the inhibiting factors. Since teacher educators play a vital role in shaping the quality of teacher education programs, the study's findings can highlight the need for promoting research skills among teacher educators, which can in turn enhance the quality of teacher education. Teacher educators who possess robust research skills can engage in evidence-based practices, contribute to educational research, and promote innovation in teaching methods.

Regarding the implications of the study, it is noticeable that institutions can greatly benefit from the findings of this study by learning what particular skills, abilities, and resources are required by the faculty, so that supporting and extra programs can be targeted to address those needs, resulting in effective utilization of limited resources. The current study also has several implications for the field of education in general and for the necessity of faculty members' personal and professional development in particular. The findings of the study informed personal and professional development programs for teacher educators. It highlights the importance of providing training and support to teacher educators to develop their research skills. This can help them stay updated with the latest research trends, enhance their teaching practices, and contribute to the improvement of teacher education programs. Another implication is related to material development. The study can inform material development for teacher education programs. By identifying the specific research skills that are necessary for teacher educators, the study can help in designing courses and modules that focus on developing these skills. This can ensure that teacher educators are adequately prepared to conduct research and mentor prospective teachers effectively.

By emphasizing the importance of research skills for teacher educators, the study can help foster a research culture within the field of teacher education. It can encourage teacher educators to actively participate in research activities, collaborate with other researchers, and contribute to the growing body of knowledge in education. This can lead to the continuous improvement of teacher education programs and practices. The study's findings also encourage ongoing evaluation and improvement of universities to provide more research opportunities for faculty members. Institutions can use the study as a benchmark to design and prepare programs and plans for enhancing their teachers' research skills and identify areas for improvement. This can promote a culture of self-reflection and continuous professional development among teacher educators. In addition, the implications of this study highlight the importance of changing some policies of journals and development programs, which can positively impact the quality of institutes and journals' performance and contribute to the advancement of the field.

Suggestions for Further Studies and Limitations

Here are a few suggestions for further studies related to the realm of faculty members' attitudes. Devoting more time to the research and conducting a longitudinal study to explore other issues on teacher educators' research productivity, teaching practices, and professional development may lead to more significant results. Furthermore, through comparative studies, researchers can compare the different attitudes of different faculty members of various majors. Other data collection methods, such as quantitative or mixed methods, can be employed to explore the experiences and perceptions of professors who will participate in the studies to gain more insights into the participants' strengths, challenges, and areas for further research. As another suggestion, other researchers can evaluate specific strategies that are adopted by professors to overcome personal or social factors affecting their participation in scholarly studies. The costs, requirements, and effectiveness of specific strategies employed, such as mentorship programs, action research projects, or collaborative research initiatives, can be assessed to determine their impact on participants' skills and capacity.

Contextual variations in different educational contexts (e.g., different provinces, institutions, or disciplines) can be taken into account to explore how contextual factors influence the faculty members' attitudes. The positive or negative impacts of different attitudes on student learning is another line of research in this area. It is recommended to investigate how the teachers' attitudes directly or indirectly influence learners' learning outcomes by examining the instructional practices and pedagogical approaches adopted by professors who have different or maybe conflicting perceptions and beliefs. These are just a few suggestions to consider for further studies. The specific research questions and methodologies would depend on the purpose of the study and the researchers' interests.

Concerning the limitations of the study, initially, the scope of the research introduces limitations. The research is concerned with faculty members of Teacher Education Universities. As the nature of qualitative research necessitates, this project was run with only ten participants. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to other populations. We determined to examine the issue deeply and thoroughly and thus we chose qualitative research design. Nevertheless, the results can be transferred to similar cases with caution.

Another limitation of the study is that financial constraints prevent us from conducting a detailed analysis of data in more universities all around the country. In other words, the sample was limited to teacher educators at Teacher Education University, and financial limitations prohibited us from studying the issue on a larger scale. The results of the present study might be affected by its small sample size. Moreover, the finding of this project is limited to the academic

context and issues. There were no concerns for other vital issues like education, entrepreneurship, and interdisciplinary studies.

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Appendix

Interview Questions

1. Please elaborate on the abilities, proficiencies, qualities, and skills of successful researchers who are teacher educators.
2. How are teacher educators empowered to be skillful and proficient researchers?
3. What aspect should be taken into account as components of a comprehensive research empowerment program for faculty members? How are these components interrelated?
4. What are the essential requirements for becoming a successful teacher/researcher?
5. What factors have contributed to success in doing research as a teacher educator (facilitative factors which promote activities or strategies that you do to keep yourself a proficient researcher and academician)?
6. What factors have impeded success in doing research as a teacher educator (debilitative factors which demote activities or strategies that you do to keep yourself a proficient researcher and academician)?